

EDITORIAL
WHY 'SOKA SPIRIT'?
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'To practice in accord with the Daishonin's word and spirit is the prime point of the SGI. It is to strive together with the intent of accomplishing kosen-rufu, of spreading this Buddhism....'

Achieving kosen-rufu, from one perspective, is a war of words. We struggle to convince people of the truth of this Buddhism through the words that we speak and write. And we have all probably experienced just how hard this can be, whether in explaining our Buddhist practice to our family members or in discussing matters regarding Nichiren Shoshu.

We have worked especially hard over the last several years to find the best words to spell out the temple issue: the SGI's stance toward Nichiren Shoshu's determined efforts to confuse people about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Sometimes we have used language that has been too emotional, and our point has been lost on our listeners. Other times, we have not emphasized the seriousness of the issue enough; our way of introducing it has caused people to see it as unrelated to their daily practice.

We have learned that there are certain words and terms that we must be careful to explain fully or use sparingly or even avoid. If we say that the priesthood is evil, for instance, it helps to explain what we mean each time by the word *evil*; we have to share how the Daishonin uses this word to refer to priests who promote distorted versions of Buddhism.

Last year, many members expressed dissatisfaction with the term *temple issue*. They felt that it did not reflect our spiritual basis for this movement. *Temple issue* did not really capture what we are doing, they argued. This is why, last December, SGI-USA's Central Executive Committee adopted Soka Spirit, a name that New York members had come up with, as a suggested new name for this movement. (No one is required to use Soka Spirit, of course — you can use another name you like better or can even keep using *temple issue* if you want.)

The name Soka Spirit derives from the "Soka Gakkai spirit" that SGI President Ikeda often cites. After all, educating people about Nichiren Shoshu's true intent is synonymous with the Soka Gakkai spirit—to counter selflessly any forces that threaten this Buddhism and to make sure that we protect the Law for the people, for the future, based on the example set for us by the Daishonin. This has been the spirit of the successive Soka Gakkai presidents, who have withstood great persecution, including unjust imprisonment, for their kosen-rufu activities.

As SGI-USA Vice General Director Greg Martin explained in a lecture at the recent Soka Spirit Conference in Florida: "To practice in accord with the Daishonin's word and spirit is the prime point of the SGI. It is to strive together with the intent of accomplishing kosen-rufu, of spreading this Buddhism.... To grasp this spirit and inherit the Daishonin's will is the opportunity presented to us by the priesthood's attacks on us and their distortions of the Daishonin's teachings. For us to inherit the torch of kosen-rufu that President Ikeda wants to pass to us, we must have the understanding and courage to propagate this philosophy — in this case, to clarify the correct practice of the Daishonin's

Buddhism, contrasting it with the incorrect practice. The question is whether we will have the courage to accept this mission.”

Above all, when it comes to this mission, “it is the heart that is important” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 949). We need to strengthen the courageous heart each of us already has—the heart to take full responsibility for elucidating the correct practice. In continually finding new ways to articulate the often difficult-to-broach subject of Nichiren Shoshu’s falseness, our sincere desire to help others understand is needed. This desire is, in fact, the only thing that, when expressed in the most appropriate way, will move others to open their hearts to the matter. Our war of words must always begin with the resolve to make the Soka Gakkai spirit our own, to live the Soka Gakkai spirit, to move with this spirit.

This is the conclusion that the Soka Spirit Conference participants reached with the pledge they agreed on: “We pledge to lay down our lives to courageously protect the Soka Gakkai spirit, to be victorious against the enemies of human justice and to be a beacon of hope for all humanity.” This one sentence sums up what Soka Spirit is all about: It is to continue, to the best of our ability—with our words, with our hearts, with our actions—the struggle for the Law in America.